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MODERN ALCHEMY

(Appointed to Clark Prize Exhibition)

By Arthur W. Browne, '27

To live, and to live happily, has been the ambition of mankind in all stages of his development. "Life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness"—given these, and man considers his goal as won, his purpose as achieved. Yet in answer to these yearnings the world has offered toil, suffering, and death. Throughout the ages, ghosts of famine and specters of disease have threatened the very existence of the race. Life seemed bitter, and happiness was both distant and unattainable. The Church proposed a future life;—but why the endless suffering and misery on the earth? If only perfection could be brought to earth, gold created, disease banished, food made plentiful, and life prolonged indefinitely, then the battle would be won. And so, throughout the centuries mankind has sought to remake the world, to exact from nature a life, free from drudgery, and endless in its possibilities for comfort and happiness.

Whether in ancient or in modern times, alchemy, the transmutation of the base into the precious, has been man's way of accomplishing these ends. There was the ancient alchemy, with all its mystical associations and magical methods—man's attempt to transmute base metals into gold, to eradicate disease, and to prolong life, all these by means of the mysterious philosopher's stone. Then comes the science of today—the modern alchemy—an increasing realization of the dreams of the ancient alchemy—a fulfillment of the yearnings of men for a new world, a luxurious world, a happy world. And, moreover, there is the new chemistry, whereby the base is actually transmuted into the precious, the crass, raw materials of the earth into products of inestimable value to man.

Alchemy! And no sooner is the word uttered, than there arises before the imagination, the whole realm of fiction—wild, fantastic, wonderful! The shop of the ancient alchemist! What a bevy of mystery, magic, and the black arts! The mysterious philosopher's stone, once found, could by mere contact transmute base metals into precious gold. Its fortunate owner was assured, not only abundant wealth, but a life, long and healthy, free from illness, and exempt from death.

At last man's yearnings were to be satisfied. The "elixir vitae" had been found. The passion of alchemy spread like mad throughout the world. In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, thousands flocked to the laboratory of the alchemist. For lo, here was wealth, freedom from disease, life—but more than that—long life, and happy life!

Yes—but no! The philosopher's stone lay always just beyond reach. Metal transmutations were fraudulent, and couldn't be repeated. Hardship, pestilence, and death, reigned as before. Alas, ancient alchemy had failed utterly, and once again disillusioned humanity returned to a cruel world—not yet conquered.

Absurd as it might seem today, the ancient alchemy had two valuable results. Although itself a disappointing fiasco, it reawakened and intensified the all-consuming desire for life, comfort, and material happiness. But more than that, it lay the foundation for the true science of chemistry—the modern alchemy—at last the transmutation of the base into the precious, the undesirable into the desirable.

But a skeptical world inquires: Why is science the modern alchemy? And the answer—because it is accomplishing the very results first expected of ancient alchemy, then attributed to the mystical philosopher's stone. Transmutation of elements? Yes, for Rutherford knocks the element hydrogen out of nitrogen, sodium, aluminum, and phosphorus, and produces in each case a new and distant element. And most striking of all, experiments of the last year seem to indicate that gold, the very element sought by the ancients, can be obtained from mercury. Sixty-five thousand dollars for every dollar's worth of gold, but the fact of the transmutation remains a startling achievement of the modern alchemy.

Again, the philosopher's stone was alleged to cure disease. Modern medicine has actually conquered many of the horrible plagues—black death, yellow fever, leprosy. Pasteur—the germ theory of disease—and then, science produced vaccines and antiseptics for the prevention of diseases innumerable, the scourge of childhood, the bane of man. As the march of science continues, humanity comes ever closer to the ultimate dream of the ancient alchemist—the eradication of disease from the face of the earth.

Alchemy aspired to banish the suffering, hardship, and drudgery of the world. And once again modern science proves itself the modern alchemy. Chemistry prepares the metals, and now machinery is doing the work of the world. The railroad, the automobile, the airplane, are annihilating time and space. Communication is becoming instantaneous, with the telephone, the telegraph, the radio, and that marvel of marvels—television. Electricity, the super-power of mankind, is serving the well-being, the comfort, and the luxury of humanity. The present generation, heir to a life unknown to its fathers, is reaping the benefits of a new alchemy—the alchemy of fact, and not of magic—the alchemy of achievement—the alchemy of modern science.

All this is marvelous. Yet, modern synthetic chemistry, the philosopher's stone of the modern alchemy, is a reality even more astounding and more wonderful. The chemist of today is the great benefactor of humanity. Wandering upon an unknown sea, he returns laden with treasure greater than all the wealth—

> "—which far
> Outshines the wealth of Ormus and of Ind,
> Or where the gorgeous East, with richest hand,
> Showers on her kings barbaric pearl and gold."

As he pushes farther and farther on the great venture, he brings back more and more, until now the lives of men are made easier and happier by the strange, most useful, and most potent things of which he is the creator. The chemist of today is the modern alchemist, who by his weird ingenuity and infallible certainty is able to convert the raw materials of nature into new substances of untold benefit to humanity.

Thus coal tar, an ugly malodorous substance, yields products innumerable:—dyes by the thousand; explosives, which the strongest works of man are powerless to resist; antiseptics and drugs; and finally, synthetic perfumes. Through the miracles of the new alchemy, the chemical laboratory has become fragrant as a garden, filled with the perfumes of violet and rose, helitrope, lilac, hyacinth, and orange blossom; and from the stills of the chemist there flow liquids whose flavors imitate those of the apple, pear, and pineapple, surpassing even the fruits of the Hesperides.

That man is becoming independent of the chemistry of nature, is a marvel indeed. There is artificial silk, without the silkworm, imitation leather, without the hides of animals, and even synthetic rubber, without the sap of the rubber tree.

Yet important as these materials are in the service of man, the crowning hope of the new alchemy lies in the creation of artificial foods. On food, the existence and civilization of man depend. Its cheap and plentiful production is a foremost concern of modern society. And again it is the modern alchemy that solves the problem. By the wholesale production of artificial fertilizers, "the desert is made to blossom as the rose." But even the creation of the food itself is a reality of the new chemistry. Given wood pulp, and the chemist produces sugar. Within a century, starch and sugar may be as cheap as the sawdust from which it will be made. And so, that great problem of civilization—the preparation of food—promises to be a crowning achievement of the modern alchemy.

There now dawns the culmination of one of the fondest and deepest aspirations of modern society—the abolition of war, the attainment of world peace and harmony. "It would require a quill, plucked from an angel's wing, and dipped in the gore of human depravity, to depict to you the horrors of insatiate war." Nations collide, and then—carnage, misery, death. But now this age-old curse of humanity is becoming unnecessary. For modern alchemy is bound to remove the cause of war, when at last it provides the food for a hungry world. The warrior of yesterday becomes the chemist of today, and the chemist, the modern alchemist, is meeting the most pressing needs of mankind. A world at peace and in harmony; a civilization devoted to culture, and literature, and art; finally—a humanity of super-men; such is the goal of modern alchemy.

The world has seen two kinds of alchemy—the old and the new. But the new alchemy, itself the realization of the dreams of its predecessor, has accomplished miracles appalling in their immensity, and limitless in their possibility of blessing for humanity. Natural resources will diminish, and the population will increase. But science, the real alchemy, will ever beckon on to greater wonders and more startling achievements.

And now humanity, having once striven to overcome nature by the magic of the ancient alchemy, at last attains the fulfillment of its aspirations through the marvels of chemical science. This new alchemy, standing at the threshold of a limitless future, places mankind in full command of the natural universe, and triumphantly acclaims him as the proud master of human destiny, the wise arbiter of the world's material problems.

HINDENBURG, SOLDIER AND STATESMAN

(Appointed to Clark Prize Exhibition)

By Frederic S. Marquardt, '27

Loyalty, an unceasing and unswerving allegiance to what he considered a great cause, strikes the *keynote* to the character of Hindenburg. Virtual ruler of the German people during the final year of the monarchy, he is now the nominal leader of his people during the first years of the republic. Despite the complete annihilation of the monarchy which he revered, Hindenburg's devotion to his Fatherland doggedly persists under the new and trying conditions of the republic.

Twice he has gone into retirement; twice he has sought the rest to which his laborious devotions have so richly entitled him. Both times he has been called back to serve further the people to whom he has dedicated his life; both times he has answered the summons with *every faculty at his command*. First as a soldier he was detailed to check and hurl back the ever-rising Allied military forces. Then as a statesman he was the first man to be elected president of the infant German republic. In twice thrusting aside the peace and quiet of the retirement which should have been his reward, Hindenburg has given the world an example of unassuming fealty which will ring down through the chapters of history.

Loyalty was inculcated into the very fibre of the man from earliest childhood. His father a Prussian officer, his mother the daughter of an army surgeon, Paul von Hindenburg slipped **naturally** into the routine of army life. His progress up the ladder of military achievement was far from sensational. At eighteen he first enjoyed the smell of smoke serving in the capacity of lieutenant in the Austro-Prussian War. At forty-seven he achieved the rank of colonel. Diligent application to the science of warfare won for him a reputation as a tactician and later a professorship in the War Academy. In 1904 he was appointed Commander of the IV Army Corps, thereby achieving the highest peace-time office open to members of his profession. In 1911 he retired to make way for younger officers and began to write his memoirs, which he believed would be of interest only to his own family. It is a simple, unspectacular record of sixty-four years' devotion to King and to Fatherland.

With the declaration of war in 1914, Hindenburg tendered his services to the German government as a matter of course. There followed two weeks of nerve-racking silence on the part of General Headquarters. Suddenly, when Hindenburg had come to the conclusion that his offer would not be accepted, a telegram announced that he had been given command of the Eastern Army. Eight hours later he boarded a special train at Hanover. With his Chief-of-Staff, Ludendorff, he went over plans for the coming campaign. Three days later the civilized world rocked with the news of his breath-taking victory at Tannenburg. Eighty thousand Russians were killed in combat or drowned in the Massurian Lakes and marshes during this single engagement. In seven days Hindenburg had driven the Russian Narew Army of five army corps and three cavalry divisions across its own frontier. In six months he had taken half a million prisoners while the casualties of the Russian "Steam-roller" must have exceeded that number. Such losses, unparalleled in all the annals of warfare, would have meant utter and complete disaster in any ordinary war. Outnumbered three to one, Hindenburg employed a daring double flanking movement that would have spelled defeat to a less resolute general. Unknown, even to some of the Senior Staff officers, a few brief weeks earlier, the name of Hindenburg was now so deeply engraved in the hearts of the German people that no future defeats could remove it.

Behind the huge, massive, restrained figure of Hindenburg, there moved the bitter, snarling, aggressive genius of Ludendorff. A strange pair they made, Hindenburg conscientious, thorough, disciplined and Ludendorff brilliant, rash, flighty. Hindenburg speaks of the alliance as "our happy marriage" and the Allied chiefs regarded Hindenburg-Ludendorff as an entity. "I realized," Hindenburg wrote in his memoirs several years later, "that one of my principal tasks was, as far as possible, to give free scope to his intellectual powers . . . . and if necessary to clear the way for him . . . ."

As defeat after crushing defeat rolled over the western army, the German war lords made a last desperate attempt to quell the rising storm of criticism by elevating the hero of the Massurian Lakes to the position of the Commander-in-Chief of the German forces. Hindenburg accepted, and brought Ludendorff to Headquarters with him. Assuming complete political as well as military dictatorship, Hindenburg-Ludendorff dismissed the Chancellor, disregarded the Reichstag's resolution for peace without indemnities, vetoed the decision to give up Belgium, and annexed the Baltic States and Poland. With these latest trophies as evidences of their supreme military genius, they appeared in person before the Reichstag and advanced their famous one-year program leading to a complete victory and a German peace. They estimated the cost of victory at million lives and then, after some reflection, increased it to a million and a half. Hypnotized by the sheer audacity of the plan, the Reichstag sanctioned their proposal.

As inevitable defeat welled up around them, Ludendorff left the country, the Kaiser abdicated, but Hindenburg stood fast. In the hour of their need he did not desert his soldiers. Disappointed in his King's apparent cowardice, Hindenburg offered to stand trial in his place. As War Criminal Number 237, he made no attempt to escape whatever blame for disaster the Allies might apportion to him. To the German people, in whose memories Tannenburg stood out as the one bright spot in many years of darkness, Hindenburg became a deity. For six months he stayed at his post and then, following the demobilization ordered by the Versailles Treaty, he again sought rest in retirement. As a huge rock stands unshaken in the tempestuous lashings of a storm, Hindenburg jutted out above the fierce welter of petty German politics. His name became symbolical of strength, of steadfastness, of character.

Once, in speaking of the peace negotiations, Hindenburg said that the German people were of a "non-political temperament" and added "it was against my will to take any part in current politics." Twice he refused to run for the presidency of the German Republic, but finally, setting aside personal desires for the good of the Fatherland, he accepted the nomination offered him by the Nationalist Party. The scattered forces of the Conservatives rallied to his standards; and the people of Germany, remembering him as the conqueror of the Russians, as the leader who offered to take the place of the Kaiser if he were brought to trial, elected him president at the first popular election held in Germany.

Sweeping aside his pledges to the Imperial House, the old man, now approaching his eightieth year, pledged anew his faith in the German people with the words "As a soldier I always thought only of the whole nation, not of parties. Parties are necessary to the parliamentary rule of the country, but the head of the state must be above parties, independent of them, and should conduct the office for the benefit of every German."

Dismal forebodings of disaster to the German Republic, both at home and in its international relations, filled the foreign press. Following the election the Paris *Temps* said: "Let no one deceive himself. The election of Field Marshal von Hindenburg is a defiance to the Allies." The London Morning Post prophesied that "The joy bells Berlin is ringing for the victory of Hindenburg are also sounding the knell of democratic government in Germany." American newspapers generally interpreted the action of the German people as a step toward the restoration of the Imperial House of Hohenzollern.

Through it all, Hindenburg remained loyal to his trust. Quietly he assumed the reins of government. Gently, but persistently, he started his beloved Fatherland on the road back to its high position among European nations. "I have witnessed the heroic struggle of my Fatherland," he said, "but I will never believe it was its death struggle." Like a clarion call to a people despondent in the slough of defeat came his challenge, "The present is lost. We have only our hope in the future. So to work!"

Battered by the relentless blows of adversity, the soldier, ever loyal to the Imperial command, is now the statesman, equally loyal to the mandates of the people. Upon him rest the hopes of Germany for regaining her place in the Sun—not the domineering place of a brutal, selfish, martial Empire, but the rightful place of a thrifty, peace-loving, intelligent nation.

HINDENBURG, SOLDIER AND STATESMAN

(Appointed to Clark Prize Exhibition)

By George G. Tyler, '27

Many changes have come since the Great War. Young men are directing the affairs of the world; success comes early in our speeded up civilization. And the War together with its many changes brought forward also the fantastic story of a granite faced old man now nearing eighty, who suddenly became famous at sixty-six, after he had retired to write his memoirs and to die in peace. It is a long story, that of the deified Field Marshal von Hindenburg, the idol of the German people. With it are closely interwoven the iron hand of Bismark, and of William I, the mailed fist of Kaiser William II, the rigid discipline of the German army, and an undying love for the Fatherland—a deep and fervent loyalty which hurried an old man from his well-earned rest into the clash of a long and discouraging conflict—a deathless devotion which made a broken-hearted General stay by his exhausted troops until the last.

"And some have greatness thrust upon them," says the bard—never more truly than in the case of Paul von Hindenburg. It was nothing unusual that he had come of a race of soldiers; Junkers have since the time of Frederick the Great. "We never troubled ourselves about the political causes of war," said Hindenburg. "Feudal loyalty to the Emperor was enough." Provincial in temperament, he is proud of it and calls it a German characteristic. His heroes come not from the classic world, but from among his own countrymen. An Alcibiades, a Themistocles, and the various Catos and Fabii sink into insignificance when placed beside a Blücher, or his All-Highest War Lord.

Sixty years ago, Hindenburg was a military cadet on the threshold of forty years of uneventful soldiering. It was mainly his scrupulous attention to details which gained for him an appointment to the General Staff. "The first requirement of a General Staff Officer is that he should keep his own personality entirely in the background." The bluff soldier, to whom the temperament of the French nation was "too vivacious and therefore too capricious," was admirably suited for such a position. Only a kind fortune has given prominence to the thousand campaigns he fought on paper in the General Staff College.

And then, as early as 1896, it was General von Hindenburg. In 1911 he retired "in good time to make room for the younger men," but in reality because of a tactless remark he had made to his Kaiser and King. It must have been with a sickening sense of disappointment that he left the army presumably forever. "But at heart I always remained the soldier," he says in his memoirs written at that time. He was sixty-four; to all appearances his active life was over. The only further official recognition would normally have come in a military funeral.

Regardless of his slight admiration for the French, Hindenburg might have taken hope from a familiar quotation in that language which reads: "Qui sait?" The Great War came suddenly, ominously out of the east.

At its advent, Hindenburg was thought too old for active service. Only when the enemy poured across the eastern frontier, only when it began to seem as if nothing could keep the Russians from Berlin—then under the press of necessity, someone in the War Office remembered that in a seaport city there lived "an old General whose obsession had been a theoretical campaign defending the eastern border." The command of the Eastern Army was quite suddenly turned over to the man whose military career had been considered closed. Within a week, the enemy falling into the old theorist's trap, were pushed across the frontier. Hindenburg struggled against an inexhaustable army for two winters in the Russian marshes. Russia was conquered, but it was too late. This much may be said: when Hindenburg became the supreme commander of the German forces, the confidence of the German people in him was unlimited. Tho' their army was defeated, their confidence in him was no less unshaken when in hardship and famine, Germany, cut off from the rest of the world, and deserted by her rapidly collapsing allies, began to understand that victory was a delusion.

We know now that there was much fanatical hatred on both sides in the World Conflict. Hindenburg was no more beloved by his enemies than was William Hohenzollern, Admiral von Tirpitz, or General Ludendorff. Hindenburg knew he was hated; he was proud of it. "See," said he at one time, "how Ludendorff was hated by his enemies, who rightly knew his worth!" When his Kaiser and King fled to Holland, when the rest of the Generals hid themselves in neutral states, he steadfastly remained with his troops. Even in defeat he was beloved by his countrymen. After seventy, he had achieved fame.

France, on the other hand, had conquered her traditional foe. But what of Clemenceau, who at seventy-five had stiffened the backbone of the French nation and pushed it on to victory? "He deserves well of his country for being the father of victory," said the French patriots, but they denied him the wish of his heart—the Presidency. So again, a twist of fortune more strange than any irony ever uttered by the sharp-tongued old cynic Clemenceau, turned his victory into gall and wormwood, and went far to make a new proverb: "To the victim belong the spoils." Hindenburg, the defeated General, who had once more, and this time voluntarily, gone into retirement, was again recalled to service—this time not as a soldier, but as President of the Republic.

Europe feared for the new German Republic when at the death of Ebert, Hindenburg became its head. He is not the candidate of the new republican element in Germany. He is an imperialist at heart: He wishes to build up the old German Army; he longs for the restoration of his Kaiser and King. What more could they expect. After seventy years' service under the German War Lords, it is only natural that Hindenburg should look back with longing at the days of "the greatness of the Empire." To the German people, the Empire is synonymous with the former dignity and prestige of Germany; it is small wonder that there should remain a deep and lasting regret in their hearts.

But Hindenburg as President of the German Republic has confirmed none of the fears of his opponents. In the old days of the Empire, he often disclaimed any relation with politics. "Mine is a non-political temperament. Perhaps my liking for political criticism is too weak, and possibly my soldierly instincts are too strong." It may be this lack of interest in political quibbling which has turned Hindenburg, the statesman, into a world figure. All opposition to the administration of the old soldier must have faded away when he asked Dr. Marx, his opponent in the race for the Presidency, to take the Chancellorship, and to head the government. What American President has done as much? Hindenburg has shown his absolute loyalty to the Republic. By summoning his defeated rival to the head of the government, he has already shown that the sense of responsibility among German leaders is not confined to any one party or group. His habit of loyalty, ingrained during seventy years of service for the Empire, is a loyalty to the German people, regardless of the form of government under which he may find them. He has shown that a soldier may also be a statesman.

So, after the enforced hatreds of war, after the international distrusts and jealousies, after the four exhausting years of an unsuccessful struggle, still undaunted he stands, the champion of the German people. "I was not afraid of war; I am not afraid of it now!" He may never forget his Kaiser, his King, and his Master, at whose command he was ever ready to give his life for the protection and glory of the Fatherland; he may mourn the passing of the Empire, and he doubtless regrets the humbled position of his country, but his highest loyalty has ever been to his people, and it is they who have given him his title of President of the Republic.

And so the world has the inspiring story of an old man nearing eighty, who says with a fine courage: "I am not under the bitter burden of despair. My gaze is directed steadfastly forward and outward. The present is lost. We have only our hope in the future. So to work!"

TENDENCIES OF THE LIBERAL ARTS COLLEGE

(Awarded one-half of the Duncan Saunders Prize)

By Frederic S. Marquardt, '27

During the current migration of American youth to American colleges, much has been written concerning the theoretical and practical advantages of a college education for everyone. Formerly, the question "Should I go to college?" was seldom raised. If a man had the requisite cash, or energy, or ambition, he went to college without questioning its advantages. He realized his good fortune is being able to secure what was popularly termed "higher education"; he accepted gratefully the crumbs of erudition which fell to his lot during four years of association with the savants of American culture; and he departed from the institution with a child-like faith in the veracity of the statement that he was now admitted "into the society of educated men." The question was not whether he should go to college, but rather whether he would be able to go to college.

The old, aristocratic era undoubtedly marked the hey-day of American liberal arts college. By the very paucity of their numbers, college graduates were welded into a close, cohesive hierarchy. They considered their own abilities, both native and acquired, far superior to those of their more plebian brothers who had been denied the advantages of a college education. With an audacity that is astounding, alumni affixed tremendous values to their undergraduate training, and with a credulity that is amazing, the hoi polloi accepted this evaluation. Although most of them couldn't read the Latin inscribed on their diplomas, college graduates believed that their sheep-skins were the open sesames to advancement, regardless of whether such advancement was to be in the professional, political, or business worlds. The realization that within a year after graduation he was as unable to conjugate the plu-perfect af *amo* as he was to distinguish between the philosophies of Plato, Socrates, and Aristotle phased the possessor of an A.B. not a whit. He had been through the mill and was now a member of the intellectual aristocracy. It was not up to him to prove that he merited special consideration. He had only to reap the benefits of those four years dedicated to the somewhat arduous, if perhaps intermittent, pursuit of knowledge.

Then, with a breath-taking suddenness, college education became alarmingly democratic. Little realizing that they were killing the goose which had so long laid their golden eggs, the American colleges tried to find room for everyone within their portals. The insatiable American thirst for doing everything on a large scale was felt by the colleges of the land. The number of undergraduates became far more important than the variety or the soundness of the curricula. Entrance requirements were winked at in the interests of larger entering classes while quantity replaced quality as the criterion for graduating classes.

America's abiding faith in the efficacy of gold as a panacea for all evils had much to do with the decision to lure the entire youth of the country into the college. The popularity of higher education was coincident with, and partially, at least, a result of, the nation's transition from a debtor to a creditor nation. There was an over-abundance of money in the United States and educational institutions set out to get a portion of it. Increased enrollment was apparently the easiest means of enriching collegiate coffers. More students meant more tuition and more tuition meant more and better professors. More undergraduates meant eventually more alumni, who furnished a wider and more fertile field for endowment campaigns. The sophistry of securing more undergraduates in order to secure more professors in order to teach the excess number of undergraduates seems to have appeared to no one. Or if anyone did have any misgivings concerning the application of mass production principles to education, he was promptly squelched by the unanimity with which his contemporaries accepted the new ideal.

The college president is far more culpable in the matter of popularizing education than he is generally willing to admit. It was he who compiled lengthy statistics attaching a definite cash value to a college education. Having estimated that each recitation hour was worth forty dollars or some equally fabulous sum to the youthful student, he broadcast his information to old and young alike. He was indefatigable in revealing the value of a college education before high school meetings, grade school assemblies, Rotary Club gatherings, and practically any kind of business men's associations.

It was generally "Prexy" who agreed to waive entrance requirements in order to secure the star prep school athlete for the college and it was he who too often disregarded eligibility requirements in order to allow the star to get into the big games of the year. In many cases he placed the administrative routine in the hands of his secretary and became a sort of a glorified press agent. Cups for competition among neighboring high schools in everything from tatting to forensic contests, unusual views materially increasing the size of the campus and making it appear fully as enchanting as the garden of Eden, statistics ranging in variety and interest from the difference in size between the largest sophomore and the smallest freshman to an accurate compilation of the number of pieces of laundry mailed out of the local post office every week,—all were added as advertising stunts to the more dignified and more traditional honorary degrees, mothers' days, fathers' days, home-coming days, and sub-freshmen days.

The president is not, of course, entirely to blame. That the ordinary alumnus should be far more interested in seeing the name of his college on the right side of a football score than in knowing that his alma mater offered the best course of biology to be found in the country is a reflection upon the alumnus, not the president. The president was merely enough of a psychologist to recognize this condition and enough of a pragmatist to employ it for his own ends. When asked by a rather belligerent alumnus concerning the progress of the college during the past year, a president is far more likely to receive approbation by pointing to a five per cent. increase in enrollment than he is by describing a new course in ethics or a modern bit of apparatus in the Physics lab.

The same desire for tangible results is evidenced by the pressure being brought to bear upon the American professoriate for productive scholarship. Herein lies one of the basic faults of the American college system, a fault, incidentally, for which there appears no remedy at hand. The average professor in American colleges has no desire to teach. Most professors are teaching either because that profession appears to offer a maximum combination of leisure, social respectability, and salary, or because they are genuinely interested in scholarship and are forced to a few hours of classes each week to keep the wolf from the door. Inspired teaching is the result of neither of these conditions. The tendency to insist upon scholarship in a visible form increases constantly. If the professor would keep in the good graces of the president, who in turn merely desires tangible results, he must produce. To determine the worth of a professor from a teaching standpoint is difficult. The grades that his students earn mean little and undergraduate opinion is all too often biased by personal feelings. On the other hand, a professor's productive scholarship is definitely ascertainable. If he has addressed a certain number of conventions, or written a certain number of articles for scholarly publications, or edited and annoted a certain number of text-books, there can be no doubt as to his efficiency. In ever increasing numbers, American professors are turning their attention to this type of work. And the ambitious student who needs a professor in the original sense of the word—a leader who can awaken his interest in the intellectual endeavors and attainments of man-kind—pays the penalty.

But regardless of the causes, American colleges, only so shortly ago the birth-right of the aristocrat, have suddenly come within the reaches of every one. It is no empty boast that today almost every one can go to college; and, as a matter of fact, almost every one does go. The dream of the college president has, in many cases, become a nightmare, and more than one educator is wondering where the avalanche, so unwittingly started a few years ago, will end. The high school graduate who formerly went directly into the shop, the office, or onto the farm has had the value of a college education thrown at him so often and so convincingly that he accepts it as gospel. Somewhat uncertain as to which occupation he wishes to pursue following graduation, he slips into the arts college. Two different attitudes, therefore, engendered by their respective mental preparations, differentiate the present college man from his predecessor. The undergraduate of twenty years ago had always intended to go to college and was absolutely sure of the benefits he would receive; his successor of today probably decided to attend college upon hearing a gifted orator extoll the rewards to be reaped from spending four years in this fashion, and after two or three years in college he is beginning to wonder whether the orator didn't exaggerate a bit.

The age-old axiom about familiarity breeding contempt is as true today as it ever was. With every one going to college, the traditional reverence for a college degree has diminished almost to the vanishing point. Respect of an aristocracy, both on the part of its own members and on the part of outsiders, depends on the exclusiveness of the aristocracy. With A.B.'s as common as Russian rubles, the value of a diploma, *per se*, has become almost negligible. The undergraduate, as well as the employer, is beginning to realize this fact. It is brought home to him in a particularly poignant fashion when, toward the end of his senior year, he attempts to secure a job. He can teach at fifteen hundred with practically no chance for advancement in the next ten years, or he can go into an office at thirty dollars a week and pray that he isn't pigeon-holed before his automatic raises insure him enough to live on comfortably for the rest of his life. As his classmates are forced to drop out of college and go to work for some reason or other, there comes to him the rather distressing realization that these men are earning as much as he will after graduation. He discovers that, to the average businessman employing a youngster, it really makes little difference whether the applicant has completed his sophomore or senior year. After a few such instances are brought to his attention, the average undergraduate comes to the conclusion that perhaps those glibly quoted statistics concerning the financial efficacy of college education had not taken all the facts into consideration. Quite often he becomes so bold as to wish that he could stay away from a few of his classes and receive the forty dollars cash each is supposed to be worth.

This feeling of frustration is, I believe, the chiefest cause for the unrest so prevalent among undergraduates in American liberal arts colleges today. Closely allied to it, and perhaps corrollary to the main proposition, is the general acceptance of the theory that four years spent in college merely constitute a period of preparation for the richer, broader life which is to follow. Both of these false ideals could be easily cleared up by a little intellectual honesty on the part of those who are guiding the destinies of American colleges.

In the first place, to put a valuation of forty dollars, or of forty cents for that matter, upon each recitation attended in college is ridiculous. Of course the college man earns more than the man who drops out after grammar school. He would earn more if neither of them had ever gone to school. Conceding that it would be intellectually possible for the day laborer to go to college and allowing for the sake of argument that the business executive had never gone past the eighth grade, still the latter would defeat the former in the race for financial success. Ingenuity, resourcefulness, persistence, ambition, nerve—these inherent traits are the ones that make for success in the industrial and business worlds. Certainly these qualities are trained somewhat by the disciplinary routine of the college course. But not to the extent which many educators would have us believe.

The second objection to the liberal arts college from the undergraduate standpoint is the traditional attitude that the college course constitutes four years of preparation for life. The thought of marking time for an additional four years is particularly distressing to an energetic, ambitious youngster who has already spent twelve in preparation for life. By the time he has completed high school he is tired of preparing for life, he is anxious to live.

The absurdity of considering the four years spent in college as solely a period of preparation is, it seems to me, evident. A man in college can be considered no less alive than a man outside of college. If anything, the ordinary undergraduate undergoes more vivid emotional experiences than does the ordinary alumnus. What other days of his life can match the rush and hurry of fraternity pledging with its accompanying consequences upon his immediate future and life? Where else are the clashes of group hatred so fierce, or the successes and failures of curricular and extra-curricular life so plainly discernable, or the emotions of friendship and enmity so fervid? Perhaps the problems of the student are trivial and his perspective on life is narrow. But his feelings are as sincere, his joy at success as unbounded, and his disappointment in failure as bitter, as the similar reactions of an adult. Certainly he is preparing for his future life, in exactly the same way that the thirty-first year of his existence will prepare him for the fortieth. Man's every act is bound to be one of preparation for what is to follow, but to think that he is any the less alive while he is preparing is patently absurd.

What the liberal arts colleges should do—or at least try to do—for its students is to give them a firm philosophy of life. In more than a superficial way it cannot teach them how to earn a living, but it can, and should, teach them how to live. To be able to find some small portion of peace and contentment in this life, to be able upon occasion to rise above the sordid ugliness that constitutes so much of life, to have at least a speaking acquaintance with the great minds that have gone before—these should be the heritage of a liberal arts college. As a retiring dean of an eastern college once said to the graduating class of that institution, "I wish you success and I wish you happiness. But I wish you happiness more than success because the successful man is not always happy but the happy man is always successful."

JUST A BUM

(Awarded one-half of the Duncan Saunders Prize)

By Ian J. Bald, ’27

Last summer Bill and I worked in the canning factory at Oakfield during the pea canning season. We didn’t work exactly in the factory, but out in the yard, forking the pea vines which the farmers brought in in wagon loads into an endless conveyor, which carried them into the vinery where they were threshed; but I won’t go into that part of it—it’s too complicated. Bill and I could have worked inside at a machine, but we told the superintendent we had been studying hard at college all year and wanted outdoor work for a change and so he put us in the yard. We usually worked fourteen or fifteen hours a day, but they always served us sandwiches and hot coffee at midnight to keep us awake, which was very generous of them. It was pretty hot working in the yard, especially in the afternoons, but it was always cool at night and they had big electric lights which made the yard almost as bright as day. We could smoke out in the yard too, which the fellows inside were not allowed to do, and the farmers used to bring jugs of hard cider in the wagons with them and sell them for a dollar a jug. We drank a good deal of that to keep us awake, especially at night, and sometimes we let the fellows inside have a drink. But of course we needed most of it for ourselves. It wasn’t a bad job, except for the long hours.

The factory was beside the Erie railroad and a good many bums worked in the yard. None of them ever stayed more than three or four days and there were always new ones on hand to take the places of the ones who left. Some of the bums never had a pitchfork in their hands before, but they usually learned pretty fast. Bill and I never had a pitchfork in our hands before, either, but in a day or two after we started, we pitched peas as if we had done it all our lives. In fact, we used to fill the conveyor so full that the vinery would be plugged and the conveyor chain would break or the big fly-wheel belt on the engine would come off, and then we could rest for twenty minutes or half an hour, while the engineers repaired the damage or put the big belt on again.

Bill and I and two high school fellows were working on one conveyor and one morning the superintendent brought over a little, hard-faced fellow with a heavy beard and told us to show him what to do.

The superintendent said, “Take it easy now, lads. There’ll be five of you on this conveyor now. No need to kill yourselves. Take it easy. Every time you plug that viner, it means time and money lost for the company.”

Bill said, “Yes, sir,” and we began to work a little slower than before. The little hard-faced fellow knew how to handle a fork and we hardly had to show him anything. He wore a dark cap, which I never saw him take off, even at night, a dark blue shirt, dark, heavy trousers, and a pair of Army shoes. He didn’t say anything until I found I had forgotten my matches and asked him for one.

I said, “Say, have you a match?”

The little fellow looked up sharply with his fork in a pile of vines and said, “What’s ’at?”

“You haven’t a match, have you? I’ve got cigarettes but no matches. Here, have a cigarette.”

The little fellow stuck his fork deeper into the pea vines and reached a thumb and finger into the watch pocket of his trousers and handed me a big, wooden kitchen match. He looked at the cigarettes I had in my hand and then at me and said:

“Say, fella, get this. I don’t use smokin’ tobacco, see? Just chewin’, that’s all.”

It’s a queer thing how he could chew tobacco without seeming to, but he was the cleanest tobacco chewer I ever saw.

We worked just fast enough to keep the conveyor full that morning and the little, hard-faced fellow didn’t say another word until the afternoon. After lunch, we started to work pretty slowly, because it was a hot afternoon and we were tired. The wagons were coming in a steady stream and the sun was getting hotter and about three o’clock Bill said, “Hell! What a day this turned out to be! Let’s plug her, boys, what do you say?”

“Good idea. You’re a bright boy, Bill,” I said. Bill and I began piling the conveyor full and the high school fellows and the little hard-faced fellow did their share and pretty soon the vines reached the viner and the conveyor chain broke and we sat down under the conveyor out of the sun. We sat under the conveyor while the engineers climbed around the machinery in the viner and the wagons formed a line a quarter of a mile long down the road, and the little, hard-faced fellow said:

“Did you ever hear the one about the three fellows that went into the restaurant?”

I wasn’t sure whether I had heard it or not, but I said, “No, I don’t think I have. What about them?”

Bill certainly never heard it before and he said:

“No, we haven’t heard it. Let’s hear it.”

“Listen, now, boys,” Bill said to the high school fellows, “this ought to be good.”

“Well,” the little hard-faced fellow said, “three fellows went into a restaurant and sat down at a table and the girl came. And the first fellow said, ‘Coffee and doughnuts.’ And the girl said to the next fellow, ‘What’s yours?’ And he said, ‘Coffee and doughnuts.’ And the girl said to the third fellow, “What’ll you have?’ And the third fellow said, ‘Coffee.’ And the girl said to him, ‘Why, you must be a sailor!’ Well, what made the girl think he was a sailor?”

“I’ve heard that before,” I said, “but I can’t think of the answer just now. It wouldn’t be fair for me to guess, anyway, because I’ve heard it before. What do you think, Bill?”

Bill looked disappointed and said, “Hell, that’s no story. That’s a riddle. I never was very good at riddles. I thought it was going to be a story.”

One of the high school fellows, called Louis, said, “You want to know why she thought he was a sailor, eh?”

“What’s your guess?” said Bill.

“I do’ know,” Louis said, “I give up. What’s the answer?”

“Sure. What made her t’ink he was a sailor?” the little hard-faced fellow said. “That’s easy. You fellows ought a be able to get that one. You fellows been to school an’ everything. It oughta be easy for you fellows.”

“School, Hell,” Bill said, “George and I go to college. Anyway, I know the answer. The fellow had seen so many life preservers in the Navy that he was sick of them, so he just asked for coffee and no doughnuts. Doughnuts are sort of the shape of life preservers, see, and he was sick of the sight of them. Tell us another. That was easy.”

The other high school fellow, whose name was Maurice, said, “He didn’t ask for coffee, he asked for doughnuts. You got it twisted, Bill. And the reason the girl thought he was a sailor was because she thought only a sailor could eat restaurant doughnuts alone. And so when he asked for just coffee and no doughnuts—I mean doughnuts—say, was it coffee or was it doughnuts?”

The little hard-faced fellow grinned slightly, showing yellow teeth and said, “I guess I better tell it to you again. I thought you fellows would get that the first time. It ain’t hard. Now listen. It’s like this. Three fellows went into a restaurant and sat down and the girl came. And the first fellow says, ‘Coffee and doughnuts.’ And the girl as’s the second fellow what’s his and he says, ‘Coffee and doughnuts.’ And———”

“The first two fellows both asked for the same thing, didn’t they?” Bill said to me in a whisper. The little hard-faced fellow heard him and said, “You got me straight this time, brother. The first two fellows says coffee and doughnuts. And the girl says to the third fellow, ‘What’s yours?’ and he says—now get this—and he says, ‘Coffee.’ And she says, ‘Why, you must be a sailor.’ Wha’ ’d she say it for? What made her think he was a sailor? T’ink hard, brother. This ought to be easy for you, goin’ to college and all. Met a fellow three years ago down on the Santa Fe said he was a college bred man. Kind of a queer bird. A little off in the head. He used to know some good po’try, though. Know that one about ‘On the road to Mandalay’?”

“Oh, of course,” I said. “Kipling.”

“Yes,” Bill said, “you will find college men in every walk of modern life. A college education does several things for a man, gives him a cultural background, teaches him to make use of his leisure moments, and sort of, well, it’s———”

“Ya,” the little fellow said, “he used to talk like that. There was another one, somt’ing about ‘She walks in beauty like the night.” He could say them pretty good, too.”

“Oh yes, Keats,” I said.

“Keats Hell,” Bill said. “It’s Shelley.”

“I t’ink he said some Dook or somethin’ wrote it,” the little fellow said. “Anyways, how about guessin’ this about why the girl thought he was a sailor?”

“Let’s see now,” Bill said. “Coffee and doughnuts. Coffee and doughnuts. It couldn’t be anything about doughboys, could it?”

Then the conveyor started running again and we crawled out and began to throw the pea vines into it. The superintendent came over and said, “Take it easy now, boys. Costs the company money every time that viner stops. Just enough to keep it running is all we want.”

“That’s what I was telling them,” Bill said, and the superintendent went away. We worked the rest of the afternoon and till two o’clock the next morning. We came back again at seven and began forking the vines into the conveyor. We were all pretty tired and Bill still felt dizzy from drinking hard cider. The farmer hadn’t brought the cider until after midnight, when he came to work in the yard, but I didn’t drink much because I had drunk two pint cans full of coffee and eaten five or six ham sandwiches at midnight and I didn’t feel thirsty after that. Bill ate some sandwiches, but he said he couldn’t bear to look a cup of coffee in the face and so he was pretty thirsty when the farmer came with the cider. Louis and Maurice tried the hard cider and didn’t like it because it was bitter and the little hard-faced fellow didn’t like it because it wasn’t old enough. Bill didn’t expect to have to drink our share of the jug, but as Bill himself said, he adapted himself to the situation on the spot with that versatility which characterizes the true college bred man.

About nine o’clock the sun was pretty hot and the little fellow went over to the boiler room to get a drink of water. I followed him over and when he finished drinking he handed me the tin dipper and said, “Well, I’m getting through here this noon. Not enough money in this job. Hours are too long.”

“Well,” I said, “how about telling me the answer to that riddle, seeing you’re leaving? I’d like to tell it to Bill.”

He told me the answer and I went back to the conveyor and he went into the office to tell the superintendent he was leaving, so that the time-keeper could have his money ready.

He didn’t come to work in the afternoon and Bill said, “Where is our little friend this afternoon?”

“Oh,” I said, “he’s pulling out for Buffalo tonight on a fast freight, and he took the afternoon off to pack up.”

“Good old George, always the kidder,” Bill said. “But he didn’t tell us the answer to that riddle of his, did he?”

“Oh,” I said, “I can tell you that. I knew it all the time.”

“Well, what is it?” Bill said. “What made the girl think he was a sailor?”

“It’s perfectly simple,” I said. “The fellow had a sailor’s uniform on.”

Louis said, “Oh, shucks” and Maurice didn’t say anything. Bill looked at me and threw down his fork and said:

“Well—I—will—be—eternally—damned! What a hell of a story! Where is that little bum? Just let me get my hands on him, that’s all!”

“Now, Bill,” I said, “control yourself. After all, he’s only a bum. He’s gone, and anyway, he looked like a pretty hard guy.”

“Well,” Bill said, “I guess you’re right. After all, he was just a bum. Hell, I’m sick of this job. Let’s plug the old viner, boys. Wha’ do you say?”

“That’s a good idea, Bill,” I said. “You’re a bright boy.”

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